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Education Provision:
Consultation Document – March 2008

Proposals for Future Education Provision
Craigston Primary School
Isle of Barra

Department of Education

Ag Amas Air Adhartas – Aiming for Advancement

PROPOSAL FOR FUTURE EDUCATIONAL PROVISION:
CRAIGSTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

1.1   TheComhairle, at its Meeting on 21 February 2008, authorised the Director of Education to proceed to undertake the necessary statutory consultations with parents of pupils concerned and the appropriate Parent Councils in terms of Section 22(A) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended, on a proposal to close Craigston Primary School with effect from 27 June 2008 on the basis of the transfer of the pupils to Castlebay School on 21 August 2008.

CONSULTATIVE PROCESS

2.1   This document outlines the background to the Comhairle's proposals in detail and provides information on the proposed arrangements for the transfer of the primary pupils in Craigston School to Castlebay School.

FUTURE TIMETABLE

3.1   The relevant Parent Councils are also being consulted, as well as Staff Associations. Consultation with interested parties will take the form of a **Public Meeting in Craigston School at 7.00pm on Wednesday, 19 March 2008**, at which the Comhairle's proposals will be explained in detail, and to which all parents concerned are invited. The Comhairle will also take into consideration any written representations on the proposals, which may be submitted to the **Chief Executive at the Comhairle Offices, Stornoway, not later than 5.00pm on Friday, 28 March 2008**.

RELEVANT COMHAIRLE POLICIES

4.1   In order to address the requirements in a rational and fair way throughout the Western Isles the Comhairle has stated the following key policies:

a)   The Comhairle is committed to provide the highest quality of educational opportunity and experience for school pupils within available resources and will rationalise education provision within agreed criteria

b)   The Comhairle is committed to consultation procedures which communicate clearly the benefits of change.

c)   The Comhairle is committed to change which is carefully planned, adequately resourced, and phased appropriately.

d)   The Comhairle is committed to the view that projects linked to school rationalisation should have priority within its programmes of Capital and Revenue expenditure.

e)   The Comhairle expects the positive support of Government in the process of school rationalisation since both Capital and Revenue expenditure are under the overall control of the Scottish Government.

f)   The Comhairle strategy for improvement in Primary Sector Educational Provision and the elimination of surplus places will be to establish schools on an area basis through new build and refurbishment as appropriate. While the final decision for each area rests with the Local Authority every effort will be made to win parental approval through the Statutory Consultation Process.

POLICY SUMMARY

5.1   In order to maintain an adequate level of provision it is necessary for the Comhairle to allocate its resources in a way which will secure the best possible education for pupils in the Western Isles. Implicit in this objective is the effective deployment of financial and other resources in order to provide better educational facilities. The Comhairle believes that it must continuously look at the provision of education in the Western Isles, to plan ahead and to determine the best way in which educational facilities of a higher standard can be made available for present and future generations.

CRITERIA

6.1   School Rationalisation is based on the application of criteria which relate to enhancing the educational provision available to pupils, improving the facilities for learning, and, through the reduction of the number of schools, concentrating resources on an area-school basis

THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

7.1   a)   Schooling for young people is provided by society for a number of reasons but promoting a learning experience is obviously the main aim. Therefore the curriculum provision offered in schools is a key feature underlying the quality of education.

        b)   The smaller the school the more the probability of the curriculum and the learning experience becoming narrowed, and consequently the experiences of the pupils becoming restricted.

        c)   Some of the difficulties in ensuring high quality education are caused by lack of resources and this is a particular problem in small schools. Since the main basis for the allocation of resources to schools is the Per Capita sum and since it is based, by definition, on numbers, the smaller the number of pupils the correspondingly smaller the Capitation allowance. While the Education Department may be able to find ways of supplementing the resource base the end-result of limited resources is the restriction of the curriculum in the small school.

d)   With regard to facilities, the actual accommodation within traditional buildings is often inadequate for what is now conceived as modern education provision, since both the curriculum and the teaching methodologies have changed significantly. It is, for example, quite common for small schools to have difficulty in accessing suitable accommodation and resources for aspects of Art and Design, Physical Education and particularly Science. Even within ordinary classrooms the utilisation of modern technological devices may be restricted by the lack of suitable facilities.

e)   Schools are responsible for educating the whole age and ability range. Within the Primary Sector the changing pattern from year to year and distribution of pupils throughout the seven years present difficulties for the teacher in planning and delivering differentiated programmes of work.

f)   Problems may be evident at the early primary levels where, if the small numbers predominate, there may be less attention paid to the experiential needs of the child as the price of rapid assimilation into the curriculum process and into the formal teaching and learning situations. This may affect not only the language development of pupils but also their social development and may limit their opportunities at an appropriately early stage to be involved in reasoning, decision-making and problem-solving, all of which are aspects of an education which is child-centred rather than knowledge-centred.

g)   The major development within the Primary and Secondary Sectors in the 1990's has been the introduction of the 5-14 Development Programme. One key feature of the programme is its emphasis on group work and this does give rise to concern that the small schools may not be able to offer meaningful group work, for example, dealing with strands in the English Programme such as "Listening in Groups" or "Talking in Groups" at appropriate levels for all pupils. This is soon to be replaced with the 3-18 Curriculum which will make consideration of such aspects even more vital.

h)   In the Expressive Arts area of the curriculum, lack of numbers may restrict the opportunities to collaborate, resolve, present, share and compete at the appropriate levels. In small schools the numbers may restrict the opportunities in Physical Education for team games and group activities, while the lack of space may restrict the opportunities of pupils to develop skills on large equipment. Even in general core subjects the extent to which things have changed can be difficult to appreciate. For example, the demand for 'practical' areas where pupils are engaged in large scale projects which were unknown to previous generations.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

8.1   Clearly the personal and social development of young people is of most concern in the small school situation. Children may lack social stimulation through the absence of peers of the same age group. Peer group interaction is important for the learning process and children require a reasonable number of pupils of a similar age with whom to interact.

8.2   In the sense that Primary sector experience is also a preparation for the Secondary sector it is possible that pupils may miss out on the experiences that make the transition to Secondary school a relatively easy one.

8.3   It is the case that pupils do benefit from the influence of a number of adults and the small school may offer only a very restricted involvement with adults.

TRAVEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1   The distance that pupils have to travel to and from school are clearly important in any assessment of the requirement to make relevant and appropriate provision. In addition, distances of themselves have to be set in the context of road conditions and the time that such travelling takes. In the case of Craigston, this is not a major consideration as the proposed receiving school is only three miles away. It thus falls well within the tolerance of the Comhairle's Policy of primary pupils not being expected to travel more than 30 minutes to attend school.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

10.1   While the main purpose of this proposal is the enhancement of educational opportunities it is also true that any review of educational provision has to be carried out against a background of diminishing financial resources, pressures on Local Authorities to reduce expenditure in real terms, and a real terms reduction in consents for Capital investment from Central Government. Investment in maintenance and improvement of existing schools, has to be seen against a background of diminishing resources and competing demands for such resources.

10.2   The major effect however is the size of the establishment where the maintenance of a number of schools, which no longer relate well to the pupil population, involves the Comhairle in heavy human resources costs, particularly in the number of promoted staff that have to be employed to manage schools. Furthermore, the provision of specialist itinerant staff means both a substantial amount of non-teaching travelling time and an expensive service cost for both the teaching and non-teaching time. Finally, the provision of an adequate level of support extends to non-teaching staff. The ever-growing administrative load requires additional clerical support for Head Teachers. Where there are very small rolls this becomes extremely cost inefficient in relation to pupil numbers.

GENERAL COMMUNITY FACTORS

11.1   No examination of the viability of a school would be complete without an examination of its context within the community. It is more the viability of the community in the future that is to some degree in question and, consequently, the choice of a suitable receiving school is a vital consideration.

RATIONALISATION ADVANTAGES

12.1   In general terms the advantages of rationalising provision can be summarised as follows:

a)   There is more opportunity to achieve better management of school buildings by making better use of capacity, to integrate special needs within mainstream provision, to create/expand nursery facilities, to provide community education, and to ensure the provision for libraries and leisure and recreational facilities.

b)   There is more opportunity to adapt buildings to take account of demographic change by changing accommodation usage within schools.

c)   There is more opportunity for overseeing the construction of new schools to meet modern curricular needs and to replace older and poorer school building stock.

ROLL TRENDS

13.1 The current and projected rolls of the school are set out below. The figures do not take account of possible movements into and out of the area and are based on the known data.

YEAR	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	TOTAL
2007/2008	3	1	0	2	0	1	3	10
2008/2009	0	3	1	0	2	0	1	7
2009/2010	0	0	3	1	0	2	0	6
2010/2011	0	0	0	3	1	0	2	6
2011/2012	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	4
2012/2013	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	4
2013/2014	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3

CURRICULAR QUALITY

14.1 **Craigston School** offers a broad, balanced curriculum in line with the 5-14 Programme although the lack of stimulus caused by low numbers now potentially impacts on this.

TRAVELLING DEMANDS

15.1 From August 2008 only five pupils will reside within the school's catchment area. If the pupils transfer to Castlebay School, they will be given direct transport with a reasonable time allowance for the pupils to make the journey to and from school. The same applies to the pupils who had been the subject of placing requests.

BUILDING FACILITIES

16.1 Even if buildings are in a reasonable condition they are usually an inheritance from an earlier age and not designed to cope with the present educational demands placed upon them without major re-modelling. Whilst it is acknowledged that such buildings could be altered and improved in a manner which is acceptable in architectural and building terms, difficulties are likely to be encountered in adapting them to contemporary educational needs, and in ensuring that they offer sufficient flexibility in use to enable them to meet future educational needs. However, it should also be noted that costs encountered in the alteration, improvement and maintenance of existing buildings tend to be higher than in constructing and maintaining new buildings.

PUPIL COSTS

17.1 The annual budgeted school running cost per pupil is obtained by dividing the total budgeted school running cost by the school roll. The total cost comprises of the following.

- Staff   (teaching and non teaching)
- Premises   (e.g. lighting, heating, maintenance, cleaning etc)
- Supplies   (including books, materials and educational equipment)
- School transport
- Catering
- Other School Costs   (e.g. Parental Councils, Administration, Examination costs where applicable etc).

17.2 The Craigston School primary pupil costs for 2007/08 are shown in the following table along with the relevant comparators.

Detail	Amount
Scottish Average	£3,422
Western Isles Primary School Average	£5,982
Castlebay School Primary Department	£7,195
Craigston Primary School	**£21,098**

17.3 As will be observed, the average costs per pupil within the Western Isles are much higher than the Scottish average in any year. When comparing the relevant costs it will be noted that, owing to the small number, the cost per pupil for Craigston is substantially higher than the figures for the potential receiving school and the average for the region.

THE FUTURE OF THE SCHOOL

18.1 Given the present and projected school roll there would appear to be only limited options:

a) **Continuing the Provision at the School.**

This is possible, but the small roll would be disadvantageous in terms of filling the wider educational function which is desirable, particularly when there is a more viable option. Prospective repair requirements and related costs are not highly substantial.

b) **Closing the School.**

It is difficult, in the light of the present and projected rolls and in the light of the comparatively limited facilities which exist at Craigston School, to avoid the consideration that the school could be closed and the pupils transferred to Castlebay School which can accommodate the additional pupils.

CONCLUSION

19.1 On the basis of the factors outlined above, it is considered that the balance of educational advantage lies with the closure of the school and transfer of pupils to Castlebay School. The receiving school will provide enhanced facilities in improved surroundings.

TIMING OF THE NEW ARRANGEMENT

20.1 This proposal is based on the principle of effecting closure on 27 June 2008 and transferring the Craigston pupils to the receiving school with effect from 21 August 2008.

TEACHING STAFF

21.1 The teaching staff complement at the school is **1** full-time teacher and **4** part-time/ itinerant staff giving an overall complement of **1.24** Full-time Equivalent staff. Itinerant staff will be given revised timetables, as already is the case from time to time.

ANCILLARY SUPPORT

22.1 a)   **Clerical/Auxiliary.**

At the current time there is a school assistant employed for 35 hours per week.

b)   **Janitor.**

There is no janitorial provision at Craigston School.

c)   **Cleaning Staff.**

The school cleaner works for 7 hours per week.

d)   **School Meals.**

A dining attendant is employed for 8 hours her week.